

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Family
Independence
Agency

Branch County heroes

January 2003

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Children's services staff go above and beyond the call of duty

**Information: Pat Weaver, Community
Resource Coordinator
Branch County Family Independence
Agency, Coldwater
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COLDWATER—Wednesday, Oct. 23 was a routine work day for Alisha Slone and Tracie Gillum, children's services specialists with Branch County FIA. Routine, that is, until they went out together to conduct a new protective services case investigation.

Little did they know that they would be called upon to perform above and beyond the call of duty, and in meeting that challenge with courage and quick thinking, be credited with saving another's life.

Unsettling event

At around 3 o'clock in the afternoon Alisha and Tracie had turned onto the road that would lead them to their original destination. At once, Tracie saw a burning house and Alisha heard the screams of a woman trapped on the porch, amid shattered windows, shooting flames and charging electrical wires.

They pulled into the drive and shouted to the woman who couldn't move away from the fire, as she was paralyzed from the waist down. Alisha and Tracie kept yelling for the woman to let go of the porch rail and drop to the ground away from the flames. Finally, she did let go and Alisha, along with a neighbor who had come to the scene, pulled her away from the porch to safety.

They found out that no other people were in the home, but there were family pets. Because of the density of fire and smoke they were unfortunately unable to rescue them.

Once the occupant of the house was in a safe clearing away from the fire, Alisha called 911 on the police radio that worker's carry along on home calls. Soon the fire department and ambulance arrived and the woman was taken to the hospital where she was treated and released for minor injuries.

This emergency occurred right at the time children were returning from school and a school bus with the two children who lived at the home pulled into the drive in the midst of all the chaos and crisis.

Alisha and Tracie, remarkably efficient in this highly stressful situation, went to the bus and told the driver to pull away out of danger. They asked the driver to speak to the children, whose mother they had rescued, to assure them that she was not badly hurt and that they would be seeing her very soon.

With the professional fire fighters and law enforcement officers on the scene, Alisha and Tracie related the details of their successful rescue. Officer Gatke of the Branch County Sheriff Department later spoke on the local radio station and gave well-deserved praise and appreciation to Alisha and Tracie who acted so selflessly during this emergency.

One might think that Alisha and Tracie would have taken the rest of the day off. Instead, they got back in the car and drove down the road to where they had originally set out for on this remarkable October day, seeming oblivious to the heroic efforts they had just shown. It was as if to say, "It's all in a day's work."

FIA people

V.L. Hooker of FIA Office of Child Support in Wayne County sent information about her co-worker, **Richard Lapham**, who was inducted into the Hamtramck Public Library Hall of Honor during a Nov. 14 ceremony. Lapham was one of four persons inducted "in appreciation of dedicated service to the Hamtramck community, its institutions and organizations," according to the library board statement. "We at the Office of Child Support are proud of Mr. Richard Lapham," Hooker said. Lapham, a resident of Hamtramck for nearly a decade, is a graduate of Livonia's Madonna University. He is a member and past president of the Polish American Historic Site Association.



Rick Lapham

Bob Porter of Traverse City – the retired director of Grand Traverse Family Independence Agency – was awarded the John Young Award by Child Guidance Inc. of Traverse City during a Nov. 7 ceremony. The award "salutes a local hero who has shown outstanding commitment to...children and families in our community," said the ceremony program. "Bob is an outstanding leader," said Traverse City schools assistant superintendent Jayne Mohr in the Nov. 13 Traverse City Record-Eagle. "His belief and commitment to the total family is evident." The story cited Porter's contributions through the human services coordinating council, Strong Families/Safe Children, establishing "Saturday Heights" youth activities, and providing leadership and support to local agencies and programs including Homeless/STEP, Truancy Intervention and Five-STAR Parents in Education.



Bob Porter

FIA appointments you may have missed in November:

- **Marilyn Stephen** was appointed director, FIA Office of Child Support. She will work with **Wally Dutkowski** on transition until Dutkowski retires in June.
- **Jean Hoffman** was appointed acting director, FIA Child and Family Services.
- **William Kordenbrock** was appointed director, Office of Legal Affairs.
- **William J. Johnson** was appointed acting director, FIA Adoption Services.
- **Derek Hitchcock** was appointed director at W. J. Maxey Training School in Whitmore Lake
- **Russell Hecko** was appointed director, FIA Accounting Division.
- **Alan Kimichik** was appointed director, FIA Office of Inspector General.
- **Bruce Hoffman** was appointed acting superintendent of Michigan Children's Institute.
- **Cindy Ahmad** is acting manager, FIA Child Welfare Institute.
- **Patrick Cannon**, director of Michigan Commission for the Blind, was appointed to Gov. Jennifer Granholm's transition policy development group.

Spending plan presented

State Budget Director Don Gilmer presented Executive Order 2002-22 to the Michigan Legislature Nov. 5, a spending reduction plan necessary to bring the fiscal year 2003 general fund budget into balance.

Legislative committees passed a version of the spending plan onto the full legislature for consideration. The bill included a one percent reduction in current year FIA spending totaling \$8 million.

- More information on the budget cutting plan is available at www.michigan.gov



FIA Icon

a publication of Michigan Family Independence Agency

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- Submit stories online through the editor or an appropriate Editorial Board member.

Family retirement

Three sisters retired together, family has 220 years with FIA & state agencies

Blissfield Advance
Oct. 16, 2002

■ Submitted by Sharon R. Neal of the Adrian Training School who said, "I have been privileged to work with the late Paul Langmeyer, Karleen and Kevin Langmeyer and Roberto Valdez, each a loving and giving employee and friend."

BLISSFIELD—Three sisters with a local connection celebrated their mutual retirements from public service with family and friends. The three sisters – Kathleen Valdez from Blissfield, Marsha Jach from Ann Arbor, and Lou Ann Hagenbuch from Deerfield – have a combined service record of more than 81 years with the state.

Valdez retired at the end of October with more than 23 years at Adrian Training School in the food services department. Her husband, Roberto Valdez has been employed 18 years as storekeeper at the school.

Jach retired from the Washtenaw FIA as a family independence supervisor after more than 29 years. Her husband, David Jach, retired from teaching at Green Oaks Boys Training School and elsewhere after 33 years of service. Green Oaks is part of the W.J. Maxey Boys Training School in Whitmore Lake.

Hagenbuch retired with more than 28 years of service with the Washtenaw FIA, working as an administrative section head. Her husband, Douglas Hagenbuch, is currently employed at the Gus Harrison Prison facility in Adrian with 10 years of employment in food services.

Another sister, Kaye Langmeyer, is a 20-year employee of the Washtenaw FIA as a receptionist and data coding operator. A brother, Kevin Langmeyer, has been employed for 14 years in the maintenance department of the Adrian Training School. Their parents, Karleen Langmeyer and the late Paul Langmeyer, also had state service. Karleen worked for the Adrian Training School starting in 1969 and retiring in 1991. Paul worked for 12 years at the Adrian Training School in the maintenance department. With grandson Shawn Ellison currently with more than six years as a youth specialist at the training school, the Langmeyer family has a total of 220 years of service.



Langmeyer family (standing l-r): Marsha (Langmeyer) and David Jach, Lou (Langmeyer) and Douglas Hagenbuch, Kevin Langmeyer, Shawn Ellison. Seated l-r: Roberto and Kathleen (Langmeyer) Valdez, Karleen Langmeyer holding a photo of Paul Langmeyer, Kaye Langmeyer.

Macomb couple receives 107th Achiever award

Their strength and inspiration is their support for one another

By: Karen Urquhart, Community Resource Coordinator
Macomb County Family Independence Agency, Clinton Township
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CLINTON TOWNSHIP – When David and Demetria Easterly relocated from Detroit to Clinton Township in July 2002 they were unemployed, homeless and worried about how they were going to provide for their two children. Despite the hardship of their situation they both remained positive and determined to become independent and make it on their own.

In less than three months they secured permanent housing, they both found employment and have had their cash assistance case closed due to earnings.

Because they demonstrated the ability to overcome odds and meet life's challenges, David and Demetria were honored as

achievers during a ceremony held Oct. 25 at the Michigan Works! Service Center in Clinton Township.

Recognition and thanks

At the recognition event, FIA Director Douglas E. Howard, Macomb County FIA director Angelo Nicholas, FIA Deputy Director for Service Delivery James Nye, Macomb County FIA Board member Sara Chalgian, and David's employer, Randy Allison, joined Macomb County FIA staff and Macomb County Michigan Works! staff to recognize the Easterlys' achievements. David and



Demetria and David Easterly

Demetria's two children and David's sister were also present to share in the celebration.

"This month I have the privilege of recognizing not one person, but two said Howard when opening the ceremony. "Today husband and wife Demetria and David Easterly are being honored for their high level of motivation as a couple and their pursuit of independence from the welfare system."

Howard recognized how, despite their situation, the couple was each other's greatest source of strength and encouragement. He praised them as wonderful role models for their children because of their determination and hard work.

A highlight of the ceremony was when David's employer Randy Allison, Human Resource Manager for MNP Corporation in Utica, recited a classified ad written by his managers describing the perfect employee. Allison said this individual should be motivated, punctual, highly committed, and

have a good attitude thereby being a joy to be around.

Allison then jokingly explained that this ad did not really exist. In reality, it was a description written by David's supervisors describing David.

Allison congratulated David on his success, saying they have "big

plans" for him at MNP Corporation.

To culminate the event, David and Demetria were presented with a gift certificate by their family independence specialist, Michelle Gnesda, and a plaque and gift certificate by Doug Howard acknowledging the Easterlys' great initiative and determination in the face of many challenges.

David's story

David and Demetria are the parents of two children – Daja Janay, age 14 and Jasmine Bell, age 7. The

couple turned to the Family Independence Agency for assistance in July 2002. Macomb County FIA provided the Easterlys with Family Independence Program benefits, Food Assistance and Medicaid, three critical support programs



Randy Allison



Angelo Nicholas

that are essential to helping families when their own resources have been depleted.

To assist with housing, FIA provided funds for a security deposit and portion of the first month's rent through the State Emergency Relief program. David and Demetria were extremely grateful for the help, but wanted to make it on their own.

Although they were temporarily deferred from the Work First program because of their homeless situation, Mr. Easterly was encouraged to attend as a volunteer. David eagerly accepted that suggestion proving how committed he was to find employment.

He enthusiastically began the Work First Program last July 17, attending the site regularly and pursuing job leads with his characteristic good nature and tenacity to succeed. David has high praise for his Work First case managers because of the continual support and encouragement he received from them while looking for work.

On August 12, 2002, David began full time employment with MNP Corporation as a bander. He has since received a promotion and is now employed with the same company as a hi-lo driver (a hi-lo is similar to a forklift.)

Family portrait
Achievers of the
Month David and
Demetria Easterly
with David's sister
(left) and children
Jasmine Bell
(center) and Daja
Janay.



Demetria's turn

During the difficult times Demetria was a constant source of support and encouragement with her husband's efforts to care for their family. Her optimism and grace contributed greatly to the well being of their household.

But Demetria was determined to do more. She initiated her own job search and last October 10 she began working full-time as a machine operator at the International Star Corporation in New Baltimore. She is extremely excited about her new job and looks forward to more good things to come.

On August 27 2002 – just a short while after initially seeking help with the Family Independence Agency – the family's cash assistance and Food Assistance cases closed due to earnings. They continue to receive transitional Medicaid benefits.

More to come

David's efforts to make a better life for his family continue today. He is currently enrolled in a GED preparation program through his Work First provider, the Macomb-St. Clair Work Force Development Board. He believes that completing his high school education will fulfill a long held dream and will open up opportunities for advancement, increasing his employment potential.

More importantly, David would like to set an example for his children and this allows him the chance to be an educational inspiration to them.

As he so amply states, "I knew these things wouldn't happen by me sitting on my duff. I'm doing this for my children because I want a better life for them."

Congratulations David and Demetria for your extraordinary determination.

Intercepted letters



Date: Oct. 16
To: Evelyn Hawkins, Eligibility Specialist
Muskegon County FIA, Muskegon
Subj: Sweetest day

Saturday is the sweetest day. On behalf of myself and all your other many clients, I want to change it to Ms. Hawkins Day. While sweetest does not come even remotely close to describing the wonder of you, I want you to know that if you never touched another life, as you have mine (but you have and will), this world will always be a better place because of you. Thank you dear, dear lady and enjoy the day as if it were your very own, because it is.

Stanley Majeski
Muskegon

■ Evelyn Hawkins handles the author's case. "Mr. Majeski's letter is not a romantic overture," said Tim Hamlin, Hawkins' boss. "His letters have been seen, on occasion, in the local newspaper. He included another letter to me in much the same style." Hamlin said Hawkins "is one of the best eligibility workers in our office for having and showing compassion toward her customers."

Date: Oct. 15
To: Children's Protective Services staff members
Kalamazoo County FIA, Kalamazoo

I am writing on behalf of all the staff at Family & Children Services to let you know that we are thinking of you during this difficult time. It is very difficult to be the object of news reporting when, because of your professional code of ethics, you cannot respond. This is a very difficult experience. We can assure you that you are valued and respected by our community in good times and in bad.

We want you to know that we have great respect for your professional judgments and the manner in which you protect the families and children in our community every day. CPS is a great and valued resource. You have one of the most difficult jobs in social work. You have to make decisions, which are frequently not popular, but are in the long term best interests of children. You do that very well! Continue with your passion, care and concern for the children of your community. They depend on you.

Don VanderKooy, CEO
Family & Children Services
Kalamazoo

Date: Oct. 10
To: Nicki Kegerreis, CPS Supervisor
Jackson County FIA, Jackson
Subj: Mahtina Rubritius

I wish to take this opportunity to comment on the professional services rendered by Ms. Mahtina Rubritius. Ms. Rubritius approached the matter in a very professional manner. She appeared to have the correct mixture of understanding of the important aspects of the case and did her job with sympathy for the family and recognition of her obligations as representative of the Family Independence Agency.

Her report was very accurate from a factual point of view. I felt that she handled the interviews with the eight children very well. It was a real pleasure working with Ms. Rubritius and I am confident that she is, and will continue to be, a real asset to the Family Independence Agency.

Ronald J. Parker (attorney)
Parker & Adams, P.C.
Jackson

■ Submitted by Tanda Reynolds of Jackson County FIA.

A note about letters

“Intercepted letters” is one of the most popular features in FIA Icon. Correspondence submitted for publication must have the approval of the author in order to be printed. Unsigned letters are not encouraged and signed correspondence requesting the author’s identity be hidden will not be published.

Correspondence from FIA customers or service applicants must be accompanied by a signed **Consent for Publication** form. This self-explanatory form can be downloaded from the MS Word template as form **0199.dot**. The consent form must include the names of other family members cited in the letter. When correspondence comes from a minor, a parent must give approval by signing the consent form.

When the author is not an FIA customer or service applicant, rules of courtesy apply and the author should verbally approve your decision to publish before correspondence is submitted.

■ Questions? Contact the editor online at Vandesandel@michigan.gov or by phone at (517) 373-7394.

Date: Sept. 19
To: Susan Gustafson, Eligibility Specialist
Gogebic County FIA, Bessemer
Subj: My status

I started a new position at work with increased wages and wonderful benefits for myself and family, therefore I would like to close our case. We can’t express enough our gratitude for the help we have received from FIA. We feel we can go it on our own now and hope another family can be given a hand up in our stead.

Please feel free to share what I wrote regarding the closing of my children’s medical case with your agency. My hope is that others can utilize the tools made available through the Family Independence Agency and that, with a strong work ethic and upbeat attitude, independence can be achieved and success attained in ways that cannot be measured monetarily.

[Joan & Thomas Bartley](#)
Ironwood

Date: Aug. 28
To: Jerome Rutland, Director
Wayne County FIA, Detroit
Subj: Karen Howard

Mrs. (Karen) Howard has done an exceptional job working with the staff at St John Detroit Riverview Hospital. Her presence has been instrumental by decreasing the number of hours my staff had to spend on the phone. One of our primary goals is patient and family satisfaction. Many of our patient and families live (nearby) and are transportation limited. By having an FIA presence on site, it facilitates the medical assistance process and it is here that Mrs. Howard’s presence is greatly appreciated.

Patients and their families alike find it more convenient to get to the hospital and Mrs. Howard finds it more effective to serve her clients on site. Prior to Mrs. Howard’s assignment, my applications were lost and follow-up was tedious. With the advent of an in-house FIA presence, follow-up efforts by my staff – that had taken six months or longer – are now down to weeks. In the two years Mrs. Howard has been here, I have not experienced any lost applications and follow-up is done on a more timely basis.

It has truly been a more effective as well as efficient medial assistance process for the indigent through the efforts of the St. John Detroit Riverview Hospital and state of Michigan through this program. Because of dedication, hard work and devotion by individuals such as Mrs. Howard and the hospital staff, St. John Riverview Hospital and the state of Michigan can accomplish their goals of public service.

[Lynn Craven](#), Director
Patient Financial Services
St. John Health System – Detroit Riverview Hospital

■ Karen Howard is an outstationed Wayne County FIA employee.

Child care team wins QRS award

Group successfully changed child care billing processes

Team is awarded \$3,000, 52 team members recognized

By Dan Cleary

■ Dan retired in October 2002

Because of extensive improvements and the positive outcome, a Child Development and Care redesign effort that began in summer 2001 netted 52 employees the largest Quality Recognition Award so far.

During an Oct. 15 event in Lansing, the team was awarded \$3,000 from the Quality Recognition Program. Each participating member attending the event received a certificate of Excellence and a \$25 gift certificate. The team elected to expend the award for a celebration luncheon and donated the \$587 balance to the Children's Trust Fund.

Members of the Child Development and Care Redesign Team recognized by the award were: **Ann Marie Sims, Bonnie Reno, Rochelle Allen, Andrew Gyurscik, Kathy Greiner, Christopher Earley, Kay Andrzejak, Dan Cleary, Paul Nelson, Willa Swartz, Sean O'Keefe, Gregg Hoag, Kathi Pioszak, Lois Brennan, Sandra Little, Billy Jones, Barbara Horton, Bev Hedin, Dan Wright, Patti Issac, Ted Pfeiffer, Joan Lamoreaux, Karen Schavey, Mark Anderson, Jim Turner, Marja Benson, Vitalija Thompson, Linda Brzak, Joe Hildenbrand, Jean Foess, Chris Petersburg, Rhonda Hart, Arlene Kipper, Gregg Willis, Sue Doby, Kathy Kennell, Diane Clark, Dick Hall, Pat Willett, Steve Craun, Chris Days, Brad Smith, Fred Smith, Nancy Presocki, Sandy Zwemer, Luann Mularz, Lupe Koutsoubos, Rochelle Ward, Sheila Barbour, Carolyn Perry, Jeannie Young and Mary Gartland.**

Why the award

The team received the award for a sequence of changes that improved customer service in the Child Care and Development Program. In August 2001 the program initiated a number of policy and systems changes to streamline eligibility, reduce paperwork and create better computer support. The changes impacted customers, child care providers and family independence specialists (FIS). Some of the changes include:

- Automatic eligibility if the family or child was already receiving Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits, eliminating the need for an application or interview and lengthening the redetermination time.
- Eliminating caseworker-calculated payments.
- Authorizing part- or full-time authorizations so providers can bill for care delivered.
- Making policy more consistent with other programs.
- Changing eligibility for minor parents living at home and for grandparents with custody of their grandchildren.
- Allowing eligibility for up to 30 days before application if the family was otherwise eligible and used child care.
- Implementing a transitional program for former FIP recipients.
- Expanding the family preservation need reason to allow coverage for any group member.
- Developing an interactive voice response system for providers to call in their billing hours and charge for care.

A year after the implementation time studies show FIS are spending 50 percent less time determining eligibility and authorizing child day care payment than before. There has been no drop in available providers and few active providers stopped providing care. Surveys indicate most providers and customers are very satisfied with the policy and systems changes. For providers, it put them in direct control of billing.



These members of the Child Care and Development work group attended the Oct. 15 event in Lansing. The group worked together to redesign the FIA's child care billing process, reducing paperwork for staff and earning a \$3,000 Quality Recognition System award, the largest prize given in that program.

The improvement process

A work group reviewed administrative rules, existing policy and federal regulations, then completed a wish list of what the ideal system would look like. Based on the wish list they re-examined policy, rules and systems to determine what needed changing to create the ideal system. Based on the identification process, work began on the changes needed to complete the redesign.

While similar efforts are given 18 months for development and implementation, this was given six months. In the end implementation was reduced to four months in an attempt to get the changes in place with the start of the coming school year.

During development and testing a committee tracked development, problems and located solutions. Training and other changes were started for FIA staff and providers to manage the new system. Initiatives included:

- FIA and Michigan 4C Association staff developed and tested provider training.
- Training was developed, tested and implemented for all FIA staff.
- Providers were trained to use the interactive voice response system to bill services.
- Systems and policy staff tested the changes to LOA2, CIMS and the phone billing system.
- Local office staff reviewed provider information and corrected addresses to ensure proper forms were sent to support billing.

The original redesign team was reconvened in fall 2002 to examine concerns about billing and to obtain provider and customer feedback to ensure a quality program. The final link in better using technology was completed when Internet billing became available and paper billing was totally eliminated.

If you are interested in process improvement and want to be recognized for process improvement, contact Stan Parker, Quality Recognition System Coordinator, by telephone (517) 373-7984 or e-mail parkers@michigan.gov

Retiring times

The end of an era and how some celebrated it

Of the 2,689 Family Independence Agency employees that retired early in 2002, more left state service at the end of October than any other time. Because of that, FIA employees attended more retirement parties last year than anytime in their lives.

The retirement parties that started last June and peaked during late October were usually joyful fun-filled events. All represented some kind of parting of ways as co-workers and friends said goodbye to each other.



Singing retirees. Sharing in a verse from “Been Set Free” are (l-r) Irene Stuart, songwriter Anthony Ryan, Colleen Ryan, Bill Brown, Rachel Richards and David Ravitch.

Rachel Cabinaw of Grand Traverse Family Independence Agency sent this about an Oct. 30 retirement party for Grand Traverse County employees that took place at the Elks Lodge.

Rachel said they sang the attached poem to the tune of The Beatles “Let It Be”, the sentimental, nostalgic song released in 1970 that was recently voted one of the 10 most popular songs in American history.

If you want to know more call Rachel at (231) 929-0162 or e-mail Cabinaw@michigan.gov

Been Set Free

By Anthony Ryan
(Sung to the tune of “Let it be”)

I wake up to the sound of muzak
Supervisor glaring over me
In my dreams we’re fully staffed, let me be.

When I find my workload has redoubled
Something scary I do see
Replacement ratios 4 to 1, this can’t be.

Been set free, retiree
Been set free, retiree
Where you’ve gone can I come, hear my plea.

And while we might get pouty
Cause there’s little chance that we will see
This level of multiplier, no siree.

At least the broken hearted people
Left at FIA agree
The only choice for reception, Let it BEA.

Been set free, retiree
Been set free, retiree
Can’t we all just one time, sing in key.

Sleep instead of drive in darkness
An end to computer technology
Kiss my ASSIST goodbye, Glory be!

For though you may have parted
We’ll so miss your trust and honesty
Your access codes were deleted before the ignition
felt your key.

Been set free, retiree
Been set free, retiree
Irene will stop her signing, for a fee.

Been set free, escapee
Been set free, won’t you please
Return as a volunteer and work for free.

Quality Recognition Program

Zone 2 “floater” process improvement nets \$1,500 award

By Deborah Porter

■ Deb retired in October 2002

TRAVERSE CITY— The FIA Zone 2 “floater” project was an innovative solution that met an age-old need to backfill employee vacancies. Because of measurable results and improved customer satisfaction the success story earned a Quality Recognition System \$1,500 award. In lieu of cash, gift certificates were awarded to the floaters and team members at a joint celebration with Grand Traverse FIA Sept. 25.

The floater program helped counties manage the basic economic laws of employee supply and demand. In several Zone 2 counties a loss of one worker can represent in a 25-50 percent loss of staff in the delivery of cash assistance or service programs.

The “floater” idea was to have a pool of staff to fill temporary vacancies in any of the zone’s 25 counties until the permanent employee returns from medical leave or a replacement person is hired.

John Nelson from Zone 1 and Jim Johnson from Zone 2 pitched the floater idea to their respective zone managers and, in September 2001, the zones received permission to develop and implement floater programs that met their individual needs. The program was based on an agreement reached between the zones, FIA Outstate Operations and Office of Human Resources.

Zone 2’s program was designed to meet the staffing needs created by temporary vacancies. We were given approval to hire 3 cash assistance (FIS/ES) and 3 service (child welfare/adult) floaters. The purpose of filling those vacancies was to realize the following benefits:

- Process assistance applications and ensure eligible customers receive timely benefits.
- Improve or not exacerbate the food assistance error rate.
- Ensure protective services complaints are acted on timely.
- Ensure required service face-to-face contacts are met with children and families.
- Eliminate or reduce the number of overdue reports.
- Realize timely completion of court-ordered home studies.

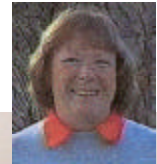
Two goals were for cash assistance floaters to cover 25 percent or more of the vacancy days and for service floaters to cover 40 percent or more of the vacancy days in Zone 2. From October 15, 2001 to April 12, 2002 there were 1,095 vacancy days in FIS/ES and 462 vacancy days in services. In FIS/ES, floaters were able to cover 299 or 27 percent of vacancy days. In services, floaters were able to cover 203 or 44 percent of service vacancy days.

A survey of 12 supervisors that experienced a floater staff in their office revealed positive support for the program. Five of six respondents agreed floaters were helpful to their local office and provided work relief to staff. In addition, 75 percent of respondents said floaters provided needed assistance to residents of the county. In addition, verbal and e-mail comments expressed appreciation.

Unfortunately the Zone 2 Floater Project was discontinued for FY 2003 but all six floaters had an enriching career experience and found permanent homes in counties that were very happy to have them!



Contributors to the program (from left above): Deb Porter with service floaters Ted Sell and Larry Hycki and Ann Church (inset photo). Below from left: AP floaters Sue Valentine, Jan Wildfong and Gail Freeman.



Balanced and Restorative Justice Week 2002

Adrian Training School celebrates with community events, wishing well

By Elizabeth Deo and Sue Anne Keagle

Adrian Training School, Adrian

Telephone (517) 264-1253

■ Adrian Training School is a residential juvenile justice facility operated by the Family Independence Agency.

ADRIAN—The week of Nov. 10–16, 2002 was a national recognition of balanced and restorative justice (BARJ). This afforded the students and staff of Adrian Training School to learn more about the community aspect of the BARJ philosophy.

Several activities were specifically designed to teach students and staff about being a positive and productive member of the community, in which they live and work.

The week began with one of our resident's grandmother speaking during chapel services. She encouraged the students and staff to be actively involved in making their communities safer by giving back.

On Monday we rolled up our sleeves for community clean-up day. Each group of students completed work projects around our campus. Despite the cold weather they were cheerful and recognized the importance of taking pride in our community.

Another highlight of this day was reading the beginning of a "community well" story. An assignment was given to each group asking them to write a conclusion. Finally, a "wishing well" was placed in the dining hall providing the opportunity for students to write a brief message of reconciliation regarding their victims.

On Wednesday, students read the final chapter of "Whirligig", a book by Paul Fleischman that portrays a young man's experience of healing the harm that he caused to his victim's family.

The week concluded on Friday with a community compassion walk. Each group of students visited 10 significant campus locations. The stops focused on Adrian Training School's community history, legacies and the impact of the current students' lives on the future of this community and their home communities.

The walk ended at our Healing Garden where the completed community well story was read. There were four conclusions submitted...all thoughtfully done. The story follows. We hope your life will be touched by it, also.



The rock is cornerstone of the ATS Healing Garden. "There's a story behind it," said Elizabeth Deo. "The maintenance crew had been mowing around the tip of this rock for 20 years. When they heard we were looking for a boulder to place in the garden they decided to dig around the rock and see how big it is. Low and behold, the rock is now in the garden. We purchased a gazebo and placed it in the garden in August. Our goal is to add (something) to the Healing Garden each year in honor of victims."

The Community Well

A time ago in Adrian, as in all small towns, there was a well. It was dug deep in the middle of the town. The well was, first, a place to get water to drink, and also to get water for the family's cooking and cleaning. Most people lived close and before long the well became the main gathering place. In addition to water, it was also a place to hear the latest news and a place to bargain and barter goods.

The water was clear and cold and the spot almost had a magical quality that drew people near in times of joy and trouble. Often times, the people talked of the ways they had been hurt. Some shared how they had been healed. In fact, after a time, the well became a place for tossing in coins and making wishes.

One lonely and shy child used to sit back against the well and listen as people came and went each day. The child was so quiet that they were almost invisible to others. The child heard all the troubles that were shared. The child also heard about the talents and caring the townspeople had. It became clear to the child that if everybody got together to talk and work together this could be the best place in the whole world to live!

But that was the problem...how could a child get everyone to talk together? To work together? To help each other? The child decided that there must be a way.

West Hall Group One, a male unit, submitted the following conclusion:

The child one night saw a shooting star as he went to the community well to flip a coin in hopes of everyone joining together. The silver coin hit the water in the bottom of the well. A voice whispered aloud. The child looked around, but not a person was anywhere to be found. Then, there was a glare from the bottom of the well, where all the people in the town of Adrian gathered.

The voice said, "You have wished a very wonderful wish. It seems that the people of this town have a very painful list." The child answered in such a voice that even the voice in the well had to remain silent in order to understand the cry of this young child.

The child wept and sobbed, trying to express all of the people's problems that he had taken in from only an earshot away.

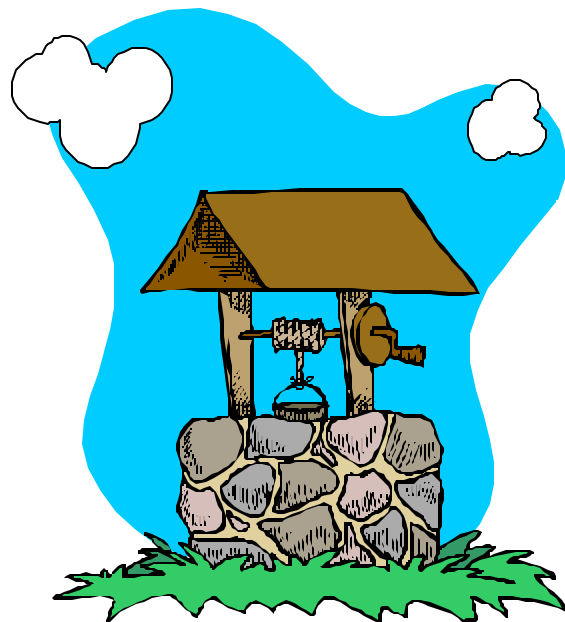
"Now, now," the voice said. "I can't grant you a wish, but I can give you words of knowledge to help you and the people of Adrian with your troubles. I want you to listen and open your heart! Everyone cries and everyone lies, but you have to fight your struggles head on. Fear overcomes most people, but inside of you is the power to change the nation."

"Really?" the boy said.

The voice continued, "You must believe in yourself and put trust in the people that are close to you. You may shed tears, but pain brings you over the fear. You can start by showing someone you care, but first stand face to face with your greatest struggles and pull together. Trust and respect will be your friends, and if you do something wrong, just say 'I'm sorry.'" The young child fell asleep to get ready to start off on the right step.

In order to move on you must lean on someone and also give help. Take a step blind and put trust into your view and pathfinder.

The End.



Performance Architect update

By Gary Swan, Performance Management Specialist
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Performance Architect (PA) is the web-based performance management system used in FIA to conduct annual performance evaluations and probationary service ratings. This article provides some background on development of this system, problems encountered during the initial rollout, and steps the Office of Human Resources has taken to address these problems.

Development and rollout

FIA wanted to initiate an overall change in the way the annual performance evaluation process is viewed and used. We wanted staff members to recognize that performance management is a daily activity of skill improvement, designed to help employees perform at their highest level. The new annual

employee evaluation process using Performance Architect places less emphasis on labeling the performance of the employee (Meets or “Exceeds Expectations”) and focuses more on developing those traits (competencies) that are exhibited by high performing employees.

In February 2001 Michigan Department of Civil Service directed FIA to pilot the new system before implementing it statewide. Because the pilot only included a portion of FIA we were still required to have an “approved” competency based system up and running for the rest of FIA by July 1, 2001.

To accomplish this, a temporary paper based system titled the “Performance Management and Competency Development” (PMCD) system was developed. Two separate training programs, were developed—one for Performance Architect pilot users and one for Performance Management and Competency Development non-pilot users.



What went wrong?

In the rush to develop and deliver the two different training programs, sessions were not up to our normal high standards. Additionally, while the Performance Architect was conceptually well designed, technically it just didn’t work! Supervisors and employees became increasingly frustrated when they were unable to navigate through the system without experiencing technical difficulties.

In December 2001 the system was officially closed for repair. FIA staffers were given the option of using Performance Architect or a paper based system to conduct the 2001 annual performance evaluations. The due date for completing the evaluations was extended from the end of January to the end of April 2002. Most staff elected to use the paper process but some were able to complete the process using PA.

In January 2002 Performance Architect was turned back on and expanded to include the entire department. The controversy over Performance Architect continued to be voiced at the April 2002 Statewide Directors meeting. Many users felt that the process was still too time-consuming and technically flawed.

What did OHR do to change this?

Several focus groups were conducted with the participants providing input for potential system enhancements. As a result a number of changes were made. They are outlined here:

- Competencies have been re-written and simplified.
- All staff will be able to “select” competencies and must select a minimum of six instead of the mandatory 11 or 12.
- Supervisors and managers currently having FIA standard laptops can connect to the FIA network with a secure ID card and access PA from home.
- Supervisors will be able to make changes to their evaluation prior to scheduling the performance conference.
- The automatic scheduling of the performance conference using the calendar feature has been revised. Supervisors will now automatically generate an e-mail to the employee asking them to establish a mutually convenient date for the conference. The date and time that the conference was actually held will be placed into the system. The date and time can be edited right up until the final evaluation is completed.
- “Self-management” will be an optional competency for all classifications.
- Text has been added to advise supervisors that the majority of probationary employees will not have a learning ladder. They will be busy learning the job during their probationary period.
- Text has been added to inform employees that they should select fewer resources when constructing their learning ladders.
- Text has been added to the system that makes it absolutely clear when the supervisors have reached the point of no return where evaluations can no longer be changed.
- The system update process has been revised to extract data directly from HRMN on a bi-weekly basis. This will allow employees to show up under the correct supervisor on a timely basis. *Note:* A Position Action Request (FIA-3857) must be submitted timely in order for employees to show up under their correct supervisor.
- Objectives can now be copied from the “Sample Objective Page” to the employee’s objective box. Once they are copied the employees can edit the information as necessary.
- The “Mark Employee Probationary” box has been moved from the “View Probationary Employees” page to the “View Employees” page so supervisors do not have to leave the list of their employees in order to mark one probationary.
- A procedure has been developed and shared with local office personnel liaisons to deal with working out of class situations and Performance Architect. Contact Gary Swan if you need a copy of this procedure.
- Reports are now available in Performance Architect that will allow division directors, county directors and district managers to monitor staff progress in Performance Architect.

In addition to these enhancements, two “how to” videos and a narrative procedure called “Performance Architect Step by Step” have been created.

The first video is for both employees and supervisors and provides a click by click demonstration of how to use PA to conduct an annual performance evaluation. The second video is for supervisors and provides a click by click demonstration of how to use PA to conduct a probationary service rating (if your work unit does not have copies of the videos, please contact Gary Swan and he will forward them to you).

The “Performance Architect Step by Step” provides a click by click narrative of how to use the system and can be found by clicking on the “HELP” button at the top of your home page. You will probably want to print this document.

Work units have been asked to designate “expert users” to serve as the central source of contact for Performance Architect issues. If you do not have an expert user designated in your organization, please designate someone and forward the name to Gary Swan as soon as possible.

We hope you find these new solutions helpful and we continue to encourage your comments regarding how we can improve this system. In the meantime, it is expected that Performance Architect will now be used exclusively to conduct annual performance evaluations and probationary service ratings for all FIA employees not in pay for performance positions. Staff persons that do not have access to personal computers should continue to use the paper system.

■ Please address your questions or comments to Gary Swan @ (517) 335-3749 or Swang@Michigan.gov

Kalamazoo's "TEAM" award

Disability Determination Service staff rewarded for team effort

By Judy Pigg Behrendt, Manager

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KALAMAZOO – A group of Kalamazoo Disability Determination Service (DDS) employees were recently cited for their team efforts.

Becky Gibbs, Marcia Guillot and Susan McGraw of the Kalamazoo DDS office were presented TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More) Award certificates in a ceremony in September 2002. The Consultative Examination (CE) Ordering and Processing Unit also received a unit award from the FIA's Quality Recognition Program.

During the award program DDS area administrator Byron Haskins distributed the certificates. Chuck Jones, Family Independence Agency administrator for DDS, was also present.

Process improvement

Marcia, Becky and

Susan shared the responsibility to initiate the CE requesting process for Michigan disability cases being worked on in Chicago, Minnesota and New York. These states assisted Michigan with its workload during the intense training and start up period of prototype. Michigan was one of 10 states in the nation to implement this more complex adjudication process.

These three women added this additional workload to their regular duties. They had to learn a different part of the claim processing procedures and computer program. Marcia, Susan and Becky initiated the request for a CE on approximately 3,000 exams.

This work involved a lot more coordination, with many interruptions from phone calls and keeping up with follow-ups so that the disability applicants would understand they needed to go to the examinations. In addition they took extra calls from the disability applicants who returned calls to them for many reasons, thinking they could answer or give information about all aspects of their claims.

Second award

The CE Ordering and Processing Unit also received a TEAM award. In addition to Becky and Susan's contributions, Marlene Ebersole and Lori Stonerock provided morale support and assisted Becky and Susan with their other workload when the workloads were the heaviest.

The assistance Becky, Marcia, Marlene, Lori and Susan provided to the Kalamazoo DDS office prevented work from having to be done by disability examiners who were busy with new ways of doing their work. They provided a valuable service to the other states so they could complete work on Michigan cases.



Kalamazoo DDS TEAM Award members (from left standing): Marlene Ebersole, Lori Stonerock, Marcia Guillot, Byron Haskins and Judy Pigg Behrendt. Seated from left: Susan McGraw and Becky Gibbs.

Traverse City DDS quality award

Self-directed work group enhances quality and improves job satisfaction

By Kristen Lund, District Manager

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TRAVERSE CITY – Every worker with a caseload knows the demands of serving each of their many customers to the best of their ability – especially when returning from vacation. In the northern service area of the Michigan Disability Determination Service (DDS) a team of workers is taking a new approach and is meeting with success.

Traditionally, claims are assigned to a single disability examiner who remains responsible for them throughout the claims process. Several disability examiners, a disability assistant and a manager comprise the typical work unit.

In June 2001 the DDS office in Traverse City introduced a new approach to adjudicating claims—a self-directed work team was formed. The team members share responsibility for each step in the claims adjudication process.

The DDS office was rewarded for this innovation with a \$1,500 award from the Quality Recognition Program. Charles Jones, the chief FIA administrator for the program, made the award Oct. 9.

Under the new process, it was anticipated this would result in several benefits to internal and external customers. Because several team members would see each case, both the team and management were hopeful that fewer issues would be overlooked and therefore quality would improve. They could also direct the workflow so that individual areas of expertise were best utilized.

To date, the team's accuracy has consistently been excellent as measured by DDS quality assurance reports. In fact, their accuracy was the best in the Michigan DDS during fiscal year 2002.

The team members and management were hopeful that the team members' job satisfaction would increase. Members participate in decision-making and have flexibility in the division of tasks. The team has more input in decision-making than a traditional DDS work unit. They meet weekly to exchange ideas and best practices and to evaluate new approaches to the division of labor. They encourage creative thinking and strive to make decisions by consensus.

A recent survey of the team members revealed a significant increase in their level of job satisfaction especially with respect to absent desk coverage and increased collegiality.

Not only are the team's decisions very accurate, but their personal service to their customers is of high quality. Sharing job duties includes rotating phone coverage, which benefits both team members and customers. Disability claimants are provided greater access to staff members at any time during regular business hours without regard to absences, vacations, or flextime. Further, shared phone coverage allows the balance of the team to work with fewer interruptions so that they can concentrate on the other important facets of case adjudication.

Their level of enthusiasm and involvement is very high, and the team plans to continue to evaluate their practices and to continuously improve their service delivery to their customers.



Traverse City DDS quality team members (standing from left): Kevin Salk, Len Sheridan, Julie Fernandez, Joan Richardson, Peggy Menge and Joyce Fahl. Seated from left: Monique Oosse, Erin Wolf, Charles Jones, Kristen Lund and Sally Kline. Jones is chief FIA administrator for DDS services and the Quality Recognition System.

New child support laws signed

Bills streamline, clarify child support process to target resources

■ For information contact Maria Candy in FIA Office of Legislative and Liaison Services, (517) 335-3519

A multi-bill child support package designed to improve collection of child support payments, ensure enforcement of parenting time orders, and assist in establishing health care coverage for children became Michigan law in September. The Family Independence Agency supported the bills, which enforce the Friend of the Court ability to deal with its ever-increasing scope of responsibilities.

The bills allow parents to “opt out” of Friend of the Court services when both parents agree and establish a court-approved process for continuing support. A signed agreement is required, and parents must be given information about the Friend of the Court services that they will not be receiving. Beginning June 2003, the parties need not obtain a court order.

Even if the parties opt out of Friend of Court Services, they can still use the State Disbursement Unit for receipt and distribution of support payments. By allowing parents to opt out of Friend of the Court services when both parties are in agreement, the bills help focus resources on cases most in need of Friend of the Court intervention.

The new laws also allow child support payments to be redirected to the individual actually providing the care to a child, and abate child support when the payer resides full time with the child. The laws permit custody and parenting time orders to be issued under the Family Support Act, thus eliminating the need for additional hearings. The court is permitted to order participation in Work First.

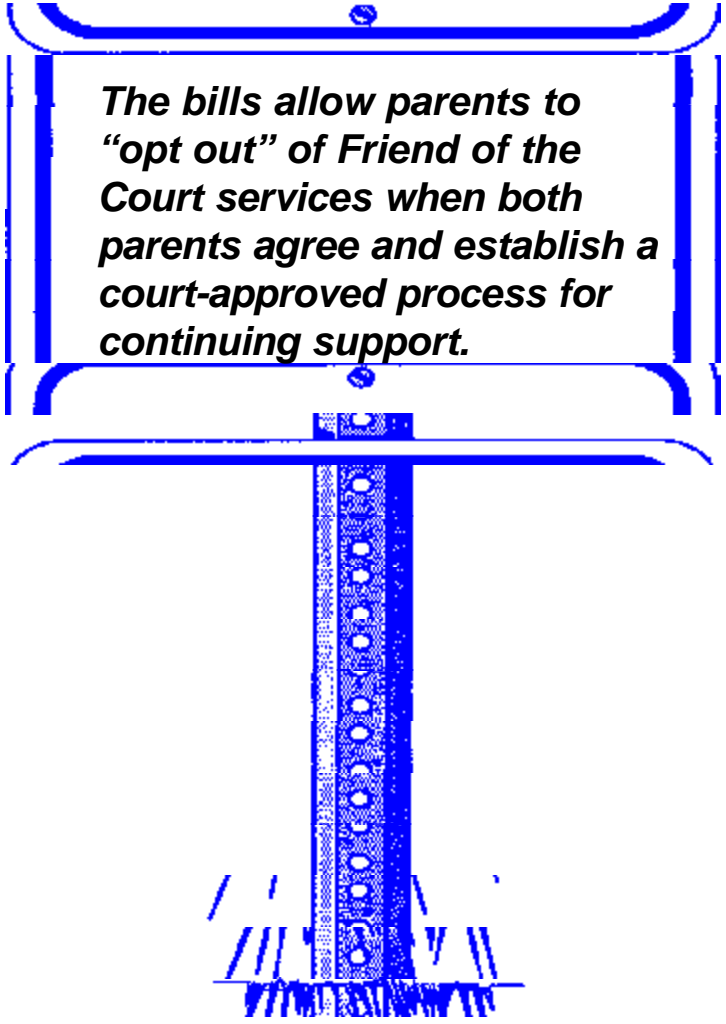
The bills allow an administrative process with appropriate due process safeguards to address:

- Collection of past due child support arrearages through the use of lien and levy.
- Enforcement of uninsured health care expenses.
- Custody or parenting time violations.

Under the provisions of the bill package, the Worker’s Compensation Bureau can release information for use in the establishment and enforcement of child support orders. The bills clarify the process for issuing bonds in child support enforcement cases, and allow statewide enforcement of bench warrants.

The bills reduce the monetary thresholds necessary to proceed with specific enforcement remedies. Only two months of arrears are necessary to qualify the case for license suspension and lien/levy enforcement action.

In Fiscal Year 2000 Michigan earned \$23.3 million in federal incentives for its performance in paternity establishment, support order establishment, current payment rates, arrearage payments and cost effectiveness. These bills are designed to continue and enhance that success.



The bills allow parents to “opt out” of Friend of the Court services when both parents agree and establish a court-approved process for continuing support.

Summary of major changes

Implementation dates for the new public acts (PA) vary. This provides a summary of some of the key pieces of the new laws. Complete copies of all public acts are available for viewing and downloading at www.michiganlegislature.org

Administrative Liens/Levies (PA 565 of 2002)

PA 565 creates an administrative lien and levy process for collecting past due child support arrearages from a non-custodial parent's financial accounts.

Monthly Support (PA 565 of 2002)

PA 565 requires that child support orders state support obligation in monthly amounts (rather than weekly, for instance). If the support order begins or ends mid-month, the support must be prorated.

Case Information from Bureau of Worker's & Unemployment Compensation (PA 566 of 2002)

PA 566 provides that the Bureau of Worker's & Unemployment Compensation is allowed to share information with the IV-D agency for the purpose of enforcing and establishing child support orders.

Failure to Appear Penalties (PA 567 of 2002)

PA 567 permits the court to order additional remedies if a non-custodial parent fails to appear in response to an order to appear in court (called a "show cause order"). Some of those remedies are:

- Finding the payer in contempt for failure to appear.
- Finding the payer in contempt for the reasons stated in the motion for the show cause hearing.
- Applying an enforcement remedy specifically designed for the nonpayment of support (such as license suspension).
- Issuing a bench warrant for the payer's arrest.
- Adjourning the hearing.

The non-custodial parent can be arrested and detained anywhere in the state and must remain in custody until a hearing occurs or until the non-custodial parent posts a bond.

Centralized Administrative Enforcement (PA 564 of 2002)

PA 564 permits the Office of Child Support, in collaboration with the State Court Administrative Office, to centralize administrative enforcement procedures for child support services in Friend of the Court cases.

Uninsured Health Care Expenses (PA 569 and PA 568 of 2002)

PA 569 and PA 568 permit the use of an administrative process for enforcement of uninsured health care expenses and for custody or parenting time violations.

Provisions for Redirection or Abatement of Support in Certain Instances (PA 570 OF 2002)

PA 570 requires all court orders to contain language that, if a child is placed in foster care, support payable under the order is assigned to the Family Independence Agency. Child support is abated for any period of time that the payer resides full time with the child.

Provisions for Opting Out of IV-D Services (PA 571 of 2002)

PA 571 permits parties in a domestic relation matter to ask the court to order that a Friend of the Court case file not be opened for their case, or that their existing Friend of the Court file be closed. Even if the parties "opt-out" of Friend of the Court services, they can still choose to use the State Disbursement Unit for receipt and disbursement of support payments. As of June of 2003, parties need not obtain a court order. PA 571 also reduces the monetary thresholds necessary to proceed with specific enforcement remedies. Only two months of arrears are necessary to qualify the case for license suspension and lien/levy enforcement action.

Iron County dares To dream

Upper Peninsula County FIA reaches “zero” for the 26th consecutive month

CASPIAN—Iron County FIA reached “zero” for the 26th consecutive month in December, becoming the first Upper Peninsula county to achieve this milestone. Iron County has one of the largest per capita retirement populations in the state and also has very limited employment opportunities.

In July 2000, the onset of being designated a Project Zero county, Iron County staff quickly recognized the challenges of reaching “zero”. Iron County is largely a rural community with no public transportation.

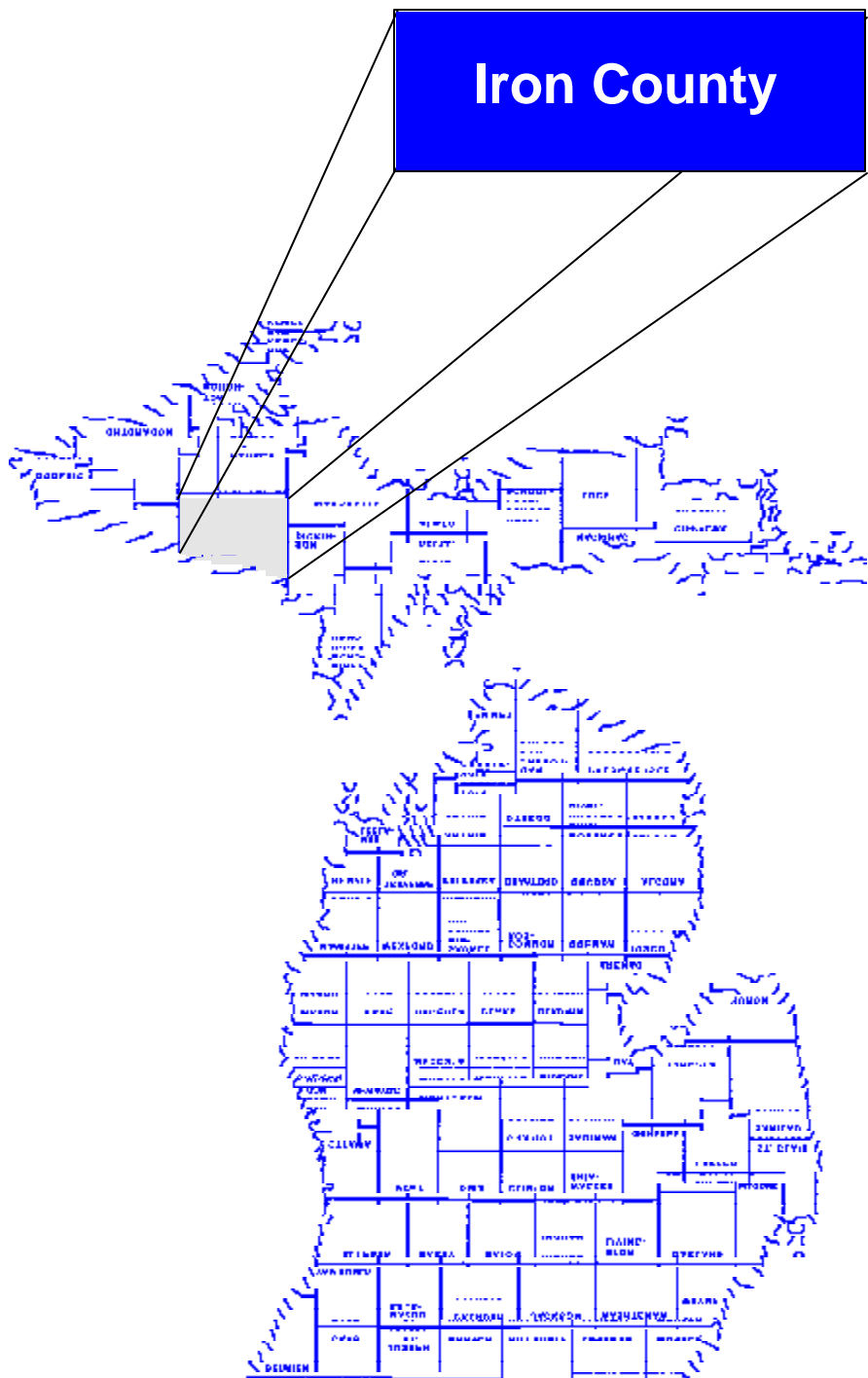
Former Iron County FIA director Catherine Angeli said: “It was through the combined efforts of our community partners and excellent cooperation with the Western Upper Peninsula Michigan Works! that enabled us to reach this goal. In addition we were fortunate to have such a dedicated Project Zero coordinator (Jaci LaRoux) who really excelled at teambuilding. Working closely with family independence managers in two counties, she brought out the best in the staff.”

From the onset, Iron County realized it was vital to make the orientation meeting a positive and interactive experience for cash assistance customers. The goal was to make the orientation session motivational and inspiring, as well as, informational.

The locally produced video “Dare To Dream” has helped do this by capturing the spirit of three local customers and their families. The agency’s solution focused concepts were recognized as being instrumental in identifying barriers and setting goals. Helping customers accept responsibility and taking ownership of their futures’ was paramount in customers’ journey to self-sufficiency.

Iron County staff came to realize that once the customer is motivated to pursue their dreams, nothing could stop them. They continue to focus on customer strengths and attempt to give customers the tools for long-term success.

Iron County’s message to customers is simple: you too can dare to dream.



2002 Leadership Academy

By Byron Kraynak, Training Manager
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As 2002 neared its end, the second class of the FIA Leadership Academy was just beginning.

This program was established in 2001 to help develop tomorrow's leaders today. The program grew out of the need to develop high potential employees in an accelerated two-year development program to meet the requirements of high level positions within FIA.

Based on the combination of results from screening tools, the FIA Executive Management Team has made their final selection for the 2002 Leadership Academy.

The participants are: **Belinda Arbogast, Rhonda Bost, Mave Coxon, Shaun Culp, Ricardo Cummings, Denise Diamond, Susan Fulton, Joe Jerome, Pamela Johnson, Paul Keast, Jane Leask, Rod Markowski, Rochelle Mason, Terry Mehren, Evelyn Parrish, Jean Ramsey, Jackie Stamper, Carmen Stephens, Rose Sullivan and Gary Swan.**

Over the next two years, these individuals will be busy with a number of exciting activities. Participants will receive developmental assessment and mentoring. They will attend specialized training and be given the opportunity to work on action learning projects.

The first assembly of the 2002 Academy was held Nov. 21, when then-FIA director Doug Howard congratulated the group members and introduced them at the statewide director's meeting. The next day all Leadership Academy participants attended an orientation session facilitated by Development Dimensions International.

Selection process

With assistance from Development Dimensions International, the FIA Office of Professional Development developed a selection process open to all managers and supervisors at any level. The program is also open to anyone at the 13 level or above and anyone at the 12 level who have been in supervisory classifications within the state. Great care has been taken to ensure that the process is fair and inclusive.

Candidates for the 2002 Academy began the process by reviewing a "realistic job preview" (RJP) and completing an "ideal job inventory" (IJI). The preview describes characteristics of high level jobs at FIA. The inventory is a tool that helps to match the interests of the candidate to characteristics of top leadership jobs within FIA. These tools were voluntary this year but were recommended for all candidates who did not apply last year.

After submitting their self-nomination forms, candidates took the "leadership situational judgment inventory" – a one-hour proctored test that measures leadership potential. Finally, each candidate



Members of the 2002 Leadership Academy gathered at an administrative meeting in November for this photo.

continued on next page

2002 Leadership Academy

continued from page 21

completed an experience profile that describes their experience in various competencies that are critical to success in leadership positions.

This year 161 employees were self-nominated. Of those, 100 employees completed both of the initial screening tools, the situational judgment inventory and experience profile. Only 43 percent advanced to the final interviews. From that pool, 20 employees made the final selection as participants to the 2002 Leadership Academy.

The Office of Professional Development would like to thank all the candidates who applied to the academy. This was an extremely competitive process and the decision was not an easy one. Many candidates were qualified but only 20 slots were available. We believe this academy represents an exceptional pool of candidates.

All who applied were given feedback and ideas of how to develop the competency areas addressed by the selection process.

Each year the Leadership Academy will add 20 more people to a pool of high potential employees. The objective is to build a pool of employees that receive accelerated developmental experience to prepare them for high level jobs at FIA.

■ **Questions about Leadership Academy? Contact Bill Patrick or Byron Kraynak at FIA Office of Professional Development.**

The Family Independence Agency will not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, sex, religion, age, height, weight, national origin, color, marital status, political beliefs or disability. If you need help with reading, writing, hearing, etc., under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are invited to make your needs known to an FIA office in your county.

Copies printed: 16,500 / Total cost: \$4,513 / Unit cost: 27 cents each / Authority: FIA Director

For information about FIA programs, or to read FIA Icon online, go to: www.michigan.gov/fia

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